

Monday, April 4, 2011@ 1:00pm

Pick-up and reconnaissance along the Merrimack River and coastal communities in New Hampshire and Massachusetts continues after the estimated release of 4 to 8 million plastics disks from the Hooksett Waste Water Treatment Facility. As of Monday, April 04, 2011, 11 New Hampshire and 34 Massachusetts river and coastal communities have been impacted by the disk release. Thus far, the disks have spread as far south as the Atlantic beaches along Wellfleet, Ma. Total estimated distance that the disks have traveled is approximately 300 miles to date. Currently, EnPro Environmental Services is under contract to conduct and coordinate the clean-up effort.

The impacted area has been broken out into 3 sectors; Merrimack River Sector, Coastal Sector, and the Cape Cod Sector. Operations, Planning, and Logistics are being handled by Enpro and are ongoing in all sectors.

The Merrimack River Sector is vital to the clean-up efforts. Boat crews are currently working the banks of the river to collect any pockets of disks to prevent further release into the ocean. It has been estimated that 8 days will be necessary to complete this task before this sector can be shut down and resources redirected.

New Hampshire beach communities are looking good at this time. Although disks have been reported in marsh areas, the number of disk sightings has dropped significantly in comparison to 2 weeks ago. North Shore and Cape Ann communities of Massachusetts are still reporting disks, but the number of disks sightings is diminishing in this area as well. Cape Cod communities from Plymouth to Provincetown are reporting vast numbers of disks that have washed up on their beaches. Volunteers have been working the beaches and gathering disks, reportedly by the thousands. EnPro crews and others are concentrating their efforts in this area to gather as much media as possible before the tides carry them back into Cape Cod Bay.

Safety is a prime concern for all of the volunteers and others engaged in the clean-up effort. Daily safety briefings are being conducted by EnPro to remind everyone of the hazards involved with the outdoor, clean-up effort. Sampling data continues from both the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Both agencies are reporting no to insignificant bacterial contamination on the plastics disks. Normal precautions which include the wearing of plastic gloves and a vigorous hand washing is recommended for those who may handle the disks or any other beach litter.

It is difficult to get an exact count of the number of disks that have been collected as of this date. However, it is estimated that between 2.5 and 3 million disks have been collected from all areas and properly disposed of.

Thank you,

Dan Pike
Director, Office of Emergency Management
Town of Hooksett